

# Viral Marketing Exposed

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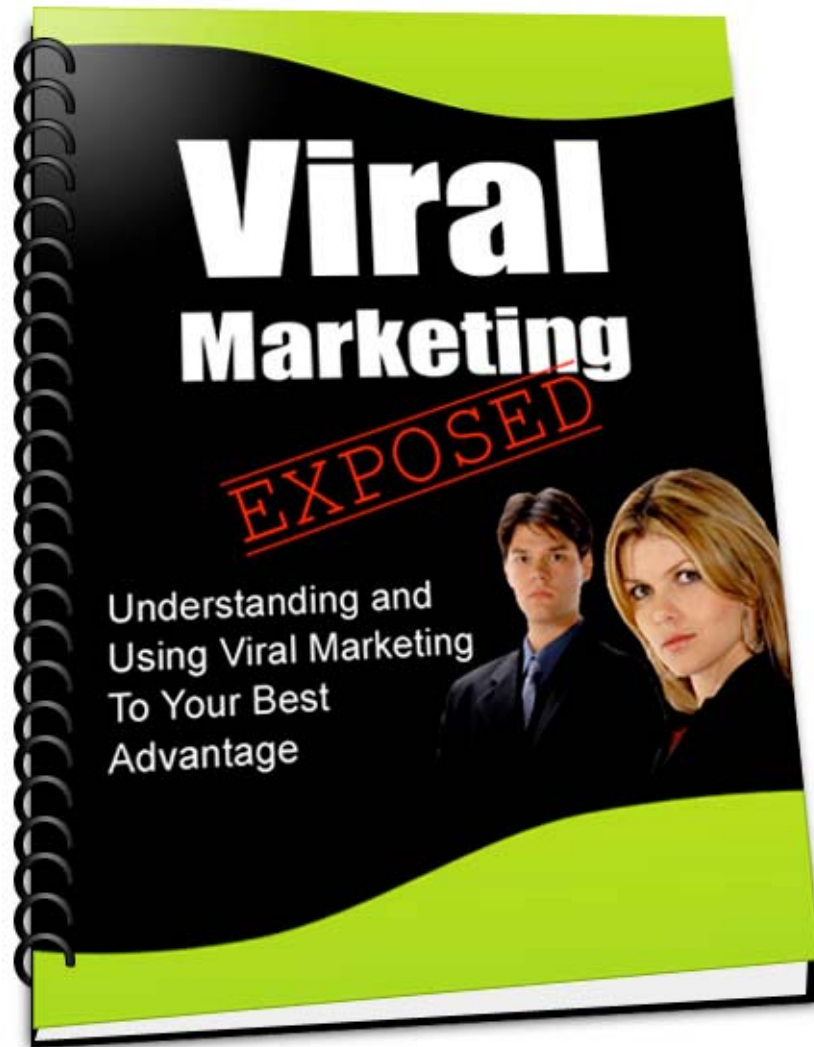


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# INTRODUCTION

If you are an Internet marketer or considering becoming an affiliate for some product or service, you have probably heard of viral marketing. There is a good reason for that. Viral marketing is a process that takes several time honored sales techniques and gives them new life, courtesy of the Internet.

It should come as no surprise to learn that a great deal of money is made online these days. Even companies that maintain brick and mortar stores and business locations often have a web site and market it to various niche markets. In addition to these larger entities, a growing number of online entrepreneurs are also making a substantial amount of money online, simply by becoming affiliates and promoting products or services on behalf of someone else, or as a private branded product.

The good news is that viral marketing is a viable sales approach for affiliates, agents and online business owners alike. The basic premise of the strategy is simply old fashioned word of mouth, given a new twist using electronic communication via the Internet. This means that anyone can learn viral marketing and employ the approach with great success.

The name for the concept is the perfect illustration of how viral marketing works. Like a virus, this marketing process spreads out, continually expanding its sphere of influence and touching many lives. Unlike many sales techniques, viral marketing is not a high pressure tactic and does not put potential buyers on the spot. In fact, if viral marketing is approached correctly, people will want to spread the word quite willingly.

If the idea of viral marketing has caught your attention, keep reading. You will soon understand such important aspects as what makes a product viral in the first place. Information about how to enhance the viability of using viral marketing for informational products is also provided, along with how to develop those products in the first place, and how to get started.

So grab a cup of coffee, settle into a comfortable chair and start reading. You may be just a few pages away from being on your way to making a substantial income making use of viral marketing.

## DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE USE OF VIRAL MARKETING?

Before exploring the potential of viral marketing, it is a good idea to determine if you are capable of making good use of this approach. While the basics of viral marketing are easy to grasp, the actual execution of a viral marketing campaign does take some work and some dedication. If you are going to be successful with viral marketing, you must be prepared to:

- Put in the hours. While some would have you think that viral marketing is a ten minute job, that is not the case. True, it is not as labor intensive as some other marketing strategies. But make no mistake about it – a quality campaign takes time to develop and to launch. If you are looking for something that involves no work, viral marketing is not for you.
- Commit to the long haul. It takes time for people to catch on to what you have to offer and begin to pass the word around to others. While there is a good chance you will begin to see results from your viral marketing campaign in a relatively short period of time, don't write it off as a failure if you don't make a ton of money in that first week. Good things take time to gel and begin to produce results.
- Make use of all your viral marketing options. Cherrypicking what you want to do is not likely to result in the best returns. This means you may need to stretch beyond your comfort level and try some new things. While that may produce a little anxiety, keep in mind that learning something new will likely make what you already know even more useful for your purposes.

If you have decided that you have what it takes to be successful with viral marketing, keep reading. There is a lot of ground to cover.

## THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE VIRAL MARKETING – A PRODUCT THAT WILL SELL

At the heart of your efforts, there must be a product that will actually be desirable to a buying public. No matter how effectively you

construct and launch a viral marketing campaign, it will ultimately fail if you don't have good product.

For this reason, your product should be designed or selected with great care. You want to make sure there is a reasonable chance that it will resonate with one or more sectors of the consumer market and thus place you in a position where marketing will stimulate interest and eventually lead to the generation of a steady flow of revenue.

Not only must your product be good enough to meet needs and compete with other products, it must also lend itself well to the basics of viral marketing. That means you must make your product viral.

## JUST WHAT MAKES A PRODUCT VIRAL IN THE FIRST PLACE?

While it is possible for all sorts of products to be viral, they will share two common characteristics: they will be attractive to consumers; and they will be easy for affiliates to publicize. Here are some ideas on how you can identify a viral product.

You will know the product is attractive to consumers if:

- People are already beginning to notice the product and order it.
- Customers are more than willing to provide testimonials.
- Customers and even prospects are willing to pass information about the product on to people in their social network.

Of course, the willingness of customers to support the product make it that much easier to attract affiliates and agents. These are people who market the product in exchange for making a commission on the sales. Affiliates will consider a product to be viral if:

- It can be private branded – that is, it is possible to customize the product so that it appears to be produced by the agent or affiliate.
- It is unique enough to meet a need in a given niche market.
- It can be promoted offline as well as online.

The bottom line that a product must be of value to the customer, so much that he or she is willing to share the good word with others. At the same time, the viral product must be attractive to affiliates and

demonstrate a great deal of opportunity to make money for everyone concerned.

Keep these points in mind as we look at one highly successful type of viral product – the simple ebook.

## WHAT IS AN EBOOK?

Before getting into how an ebook qualifies as a viral product, it is important to understand exactly what an ebook happens to be. Simply put, an ebook is an electronic book. It contains text that is focused on a given topic or tells a specific story. Like hard copy books, an ebook will include plenty of text. The ebook may also include graphics and other visual effects such as charts or other tools that help to enhance the text. Unlike hard copy books, ebooks are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased and immediately downloaded once the payment has been processed and accepted.

The ebook is a prime example of how products can be provided to online customers quickly, easily, and without a great deal of cost. For this reason, the ebook is an ideal product that can be sold through the processes of viral marketing.

## SO HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE INFORMATION PRODUCTS VIRAL?

The secret to making an information product like an ebook viral is to make it easy to distribute. In order to accomplish this, it is important to create text around a subject that online shoppers want to know about. This means choosing the right subject, so there is a quality product that can be marketed.

In order to create a viral product, it is necessary to:

- Identify a target market or markets. The best way to go about this is to do some investigation online. The idea is to find a market that has a need that is currently not met fully. Alternatively, a viral product can be developed that is in direct competition with several other products, but provides one additional benefit that the others

do not.

- Test drive the idea. This can be done by making use of chat rooms and message boards that have to do with the targeted market. Ask others there what they would think if a product having one more use or benefit than what is already available. Would they buy it?
- Develop the product based on your findings. Keep in mind that it works much better to develop a product based on needs you identify, rather than to spend time and effort putting together a product in hopes there is a market for it.

Once you have a product that is sure to appeal to a niche market and can be promoted with ease using various online resources, you essentially have a product that can be sold through viral marketing.

## GETTING THE BALL ROLLING – USING INCENTIVES TO GATHER AFFILIATES

In order to truly implement a viral marketing approach, it is necessary to entice people to spread the word on your behalf. There are several ways you can go about accomplishing this:

- Make it easy for affiliates to spread the word. For example, set up a referral program, so it is easy to track who brought a new customer through the door. One handy way to accomplish this is to provide affiliates with basic text that can be used on a splash page or web portal that takes the buyer back to a site where the product can be purchased. The URL assigned to the branded page identifies the affiliate associated with the page and makes it possible to pay a commission.
- Offer your affiliates Master Resell Rights. Essentially, this means you are providing them with the basic product, which they can then rename and sell as their own. This private branding approach allows you to put the affiliate in the driver's seat and provide them with extra incentive to market the product aggressively.
- Reward customers and affiliates that are willing to tell friends and acquaintances about the product. For example, you could offer a discount on one of your other products when so many customers purchase the viral product due to the efforts of your existing

customer. You could also offer one or two free products that are only available to customers who entice people in their social network to buy the viral product.

- Establish a mentoring process so that your affiliates don't feel as if they are on their own. A new affiliate who feels as if he or she is left with no type of support network is not likely to tap into their network of connections and begin promoting the product. Make it easy to reach you if necessary, such as with an email address that is just for the use of affiliates. You can also make it a point to communicate with your affiliates via an online newsletter or a blog where motivational articles are published and affiliates can get answers to questions they have.

While the exact strategy you will use to gather in affiliates will vary somewhat depending on the niche market you want to reach and the number of affiliates you have to communicate with directly, it is very important to offer them a reason to promote your viral product. Without that support, even the best product will never reach its full sales potential.

## CAN EBOOKS BE USED TO PROMOTE OTHER INFORMATION PRODUCTS?

In a word, yes. In fact, the creation of an ebook to promote products is one of the most basic viral marketing techniques. Why? Because people will read a free ebook on a subject they are interested in. If they like the ebook, they will also pass it on to others, so even more people read it.

Think about it. One individual reads the ebook, likes it, and decides to pass it on to three more people. Those three people in turn pass the ebook on to three more people, and so on. In a relatively short period of time, the ebook has reached a large number of people, all of whom pass it on to family and friends that are likely to be interested.

With that type of circulation, you can see how the ebook would be the perfect way to make it possible for people to find out about products they would like to purchase and to initiate the purchase while still reading the ebook.

There are two different approaches that will allow this to take place:

- Include links to your online store at various points in the text of the ebook. Since the ebook is an electronic document that can be sent as an attachment through email, consumers can click on the link and be able to shop, then go back to reading the book.
- Instead of links that take people to an online store, have the links take them to a splash page where they can learn more about a specific information product and order it with no more than a few steps required.

The bottom line is that you can use ebooks to promote other electronic products by including links at logical points in the text that will make it possible to place an order with ease. You can even sell an ebook by creating a free ebook to promote it!

## **ALONG WITH EBOOKS, WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN VIRAL MARKETING BE USED TO PROMOTE PRODUCTS?**

While ebooks are very useful in viral marketing, they are not the only option. In fact, depending on the niche market you are trying to reach, they may not be the best option. For example, if your niche market is composed of people who are much more likely to use a dialup connection rather than some faster method of Internet access, you will want to keep the communication as easy to load as possible.

There are several easy ways to employ viral marketing and reach just about anyone in any market:

- **Viral emails.** These do not make use of fancy graphics and thus don't take a long time to find their way into an inbox, even on a slow Internet connection. Instead, the viral email relies on using the text to grab the attention of the reader and compel him or her to not only click on the embedded link to purchase a product, but to also pass the email on to other people.
- **Splash pages.** These are handy for use in the viral emails. Essentially, a splash page is a simple informational page that contains a full-fledged sales pitch. Periodically through the text, there is the chance to click on an icon to go ahead and make a

purchase. As with the emails, a splash page does not have to be loaded with a lot of graphics or other elements that take a lot of time to load on a slow connection. However, if the niche market is composed of people who are likely to have high-speed connections, feel free to dress up the splash page. In either case, remember to include a number of icons or links so the reader can make a purchase any time he or she likes.

- Reports. To a degree, a report serves the same purpose as a promotional ebook. However, the report usually differs from the ebook in that it may actually be a critique of the product itself. An ebook usually is more subtle, gently addressing the general uses of the product and building a case for needing a product of that type. The report is much more pointed and directly promotes the benefits of purchasing a given product over any product offered by the competition.

It is important to note that there is no reason why all these tools cannot be used in conjunction with one another. For example, the email can point the way to the free ebook for a quick download, or include a link that will take the reader to the splash page or to the report. In all cases, the tools should make it easy for the consumer to get to a place where it is possible to quickly order, pay for and receive the informational product.

## WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS TO USE VIRAL MARKETING ONLINE?

Viral marketing strategies are not limited to emails, reports and ebooks that are easily passed from one person to another. There are also other online tools that can help spread the word with a great deal of ease. Three primary examples are:

- Message Boards. Joining and regularly participating in message boards and forums that deal with the niche market you are trying to reach is a great way to promote your products. If allowed, you can include a link to your splash page in your signature. If not, you can usually find subtle ways to get the word out. Keep in mind you need to participate regularly in discussions so that people come to know you; they will be much more likely to share the info you provide and increase the potential of making sales and spreading the word.

- Chat Rooms. Often overlooked as a way of acquainting people with a new information product, this can be a great approach. Like the message boards, the introduction of the link to your splash page or online store must be done at times that seem perfectly natural to the flow of conversation. Otherwise, people will turn a blind eye to your contribution and possibly complain that you are trying to hijack a conversation.
- Social Networking Web Sites. These are of more recent vintage, but in a very short period of time they have become one of the greatest ways to manage viral marketing. These sites cover a lot of ground, with many of them allowing links to other sites or the posting of videos on a member page. Best of all, these are usually free to join and can provide an easy way to reach a wide audience in a very short period of time.

In most cases, all these additional tools can be used to market just about any type of product, including informational ones. While there may be a short learning curve necessary before you tap into the full potential of the tool, the effort will yield excellent results and greatly enhance the chances of generating traffic to your sales sites.

## FORUMS AND CHAT ROOMS ARE EASY – BUT WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES?

There is a good chance that you already know and are comfortable with forums and chat rooms. After all, they have been around since the early days of widespread Internet access. But even people who are seasoned users of message boards and chat rooms are sometimes awed by the idea of social networking sites.

For the most part, this awe is based more on a lack of familiarity than anything else. By spending a little time at some of the more popular social networking sites, it does not take long to find your way around and begin to come up with ideas on how to make the most of these valuable resources.

To help you begin the process, here are a few things you need to know about some of the most popular social networking sites in use today:

- MyLot ([www.mylot.com](http://www.mylot.com)) – very simple to use and easy to get involved with all sorts of discussions. Registration is free. Best of all,

even people on slow connections can participate with relative ease. You can also include links to other web sites on your profile and in your message responses.

- MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) – one of the most popular of all the social networking sites, MySpace is now more than just a social networking tool. It is also classified as an authority site. Essentially, this means that businesses as well as individuals use the features to network with people all over the world. In addition to building up your social network, you can also create videos and audio files for people to watch and listen to. Because it is easy to link to your profile or to the videos, the chances of someone passing the information on to others is very high.
- Digg ([www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)) – Digg is a great place to provide links to other web sites that are of interest. This means you can "digg" your reports on your products and make them widely available in the searches found on the site. If you make use of promotional articles on various article sites to promote products, you can also "digg" your articles and gain an audience that way. The more people that "digg" your work, the more attention you will get.
- Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) – This is a great place to establish links, write a blog that is built around your product and its niche markets, and in general network with people who are likely to have an interest in what you have to offer. Like the other sites, it is easy to bookmark pages and to pass links on to other people, making it a great tool to use in viral marketing.
- Squidoo ([www.squidoo.com](http://www.squidoo.com)) – Another excellent choice for reaching an audience with relatively little trouble. Like all the sites, you need to be registered to participate. Links to articles, videos, and other sites is possible, making it easy to create one more portal to the places you want people to go.
- StumbleUpon ([www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com)) – Like Digg, this is a great place to post links to your online articles and reports that you use to promote your product. The interface allows you to place the recommended link in a particular category, which means you can easily target categories that are likely to be viewed by the consumers you want to reach. As with Digg, more than one person can "stumble upon" the same article and help boost the profile a little higher.

- Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)) – Twitter is a great place to find people with interests that fit well with your product. Like the other sites, you can post links, participate in blogs and use a wide range of tools to build a social network and attract some attention.

These are not the only social networking and authority sites online. They are a cross section of sites that cater to a general audience. However, the popularity of social networking sites has grown to the point that they rival forums as a great way to interact with other people with similar interests. This has led to the creation of a number of different types of social networking sites that cater to specific markets. While these sites don't usually have the membership found with the more generalized sites, they are worth looking into. Here are a few reasons you should consider a niche networking site:

- Everyone connected with the site is there because they have an interest in the main subject matter for the site.
- These sites are often very friendly to members promoting themselves in some manner.
- Many of these sites are confidential. This can be especially important if you are marketing an information product that has to do with a personal health issue or an adult oriented subject. When this is the case, the broad social networking sites may or may not be receptive to your product. But a niche social network would most likely embrace it with open arms.

Just as you spend some time learning how to get the most out of forums and chat rooms, you also need to take a little time figuring out how a particular social networking site works before you jump in and start participating. Here are some of the things you want to do to acclimate yourself.

- Read the FAQs. They are there for a reason. By going through the frequently asked questions, you can begin to get a handle on how the site works and probably get some inspiration on what and how to include different elements on your profile that are likely to get the response you want.
- Check out what the other members are doing. Not all social networking sites work in exactly the same way. What works fine on one may not be the most productive way to go on a different site. By reviewing different profiles and seeing how members are using

the tools, you can determine what is likely to get you the most positive attention. You may also get some ideas from what you see that had not occurred to you before.

- Get your feet wet. Most of the social networking sites will provide you with a step by step process to set up your basic profile. Many of them will include suggestions, examples, and other helps that you can make good use of while creating that basic profile. While your profile is not the be-all and end-all for your participation, you do want it to be accessible and attractive to the other members there. Don't worry if you don't get things exactly the way you like the first time. Just about all of the social networking sites make it very easy to update, add, and remove various items as you go.
- Visit the sites daily. Many people will check to see who has been on in the last day and go from there. By logging in to your account each day, even for just a few moments, you increase the chances of getting some clicks to your profile and from there having someone read your blog, watch a video, and possibly link over to your product and make a purchase or sign up to be an affiliate.
- Don't let your content go stale. Add something new regularly. People are more likely to bookmark your site and come back from time to time so they can see what new wonders you have unveiled. Consistency is the key. Even if you just add a new blog entry each Friday and add a new video on the first and fifteenth of each month, people will begin to look forward to stopping by and seeing what is new. More traffic to your profile means more chances to make a sale and also have the information passed on to others.

Social networking sites are continuing to evolve. This means that what you can do today with a given site is likely to change over time. Rarely does this mean a reduction in the tools you have on hand. More often, it means that you will find more tools you can make use of as time goes on. This makes it important to use the existing tools to best advantage, so that when a new feature is added, you are ready to incorporate that new tool into your overall marketing approach.

## **SO WHAT ABOUT THESE VIDEOS? DO THEY REALLY WORK?**

Video presentations are one of the most important tools you can develop for use in viral marketing. The reasons that a video can be so effective are pretty straightforward:

- They are a visual tool. The vast majority of people are visual in the way they relate to the world around them. Even people who are primarily audibly oriented or kinesthetic (sound or touch) often have a strong secondary visual orientation. This means videos are one of the best ways to attract attention long enough to make a point.
- They are accessible. By using one or two of the common formats, you can rest assured that just about anyone will be able to view the videos. Note the formats used for videos on the social networking sites to get some ideas on the formats you want to use.
- They pack a lot of impact in a short time frame. Some of the best video promotions last no more than thirty seconds to a minute. This means there is not much chance of the viewer losing interest before you get to your main point. That is not always the case with a report or email text.
- They can be bookmarked, emailed as attachments, and downloaded for distribution later. In other words, videos are easily distributed, making them ideal for sharing with other people.

It is important to note that a video that is created as part of a viral marketing campaign is a little different from many of the videos that proliferate around the Internet. While they may be entertaining or informative, that is not the main function of the viral video. The main purpose is to excite viewers enough that they decide they must buy your product or become an affiliate so they can start making money with your product.

In order to help make your videos viral, here are some things you need to keep in mind:

- Offer the video at more than one speed. Not everyone has a super fast connection. If you want to attract people who use dialup, make sure they can access and view the video at speed compatible with a 56K connection. At the same time, include options for other viewers with more robust connections.

- Keep it focused. Remember that you don't have all day to make your point. Set up the circumstances and lead the course of the action to a logical and productive conclusion. And make sure you do it before the person viewing the video has a chance to become bored and move on.
- Keep it simple. That doesn't mean you can't use some special effects or include a couple of bells and whistles. Just don't inundate the viewer with so much sensory stimulation that your message is lost underneath all the pretty extras. You want the special effects to enhance your subject matter, not hide it.
- Include a sound track that makes sense. The very best of viral videos are actually a marriage of video that makes sense on its own and audio that also makes sense when experienced without video. At the same time, the two should represent a total package, with the video and the audio working together. In a sense, this means your video is three different presentations rolled into one: an audio presentation, a video presentation, and a sound video presentation. Between the three, you can reach quite a few people.
- End the video with your contact information. This ideally should be the web site address where viewers can go to learn more about what you are selling. Make sure that the information remains visible for at least ten to fifteen seconds before fading out. Why? Because you want to give people a chance to grab a pencil and write down the URL. As a backup, you can also have the same URL set up as a link in a box near the viewing window if you have placed the video on a social network site. But regardless of whether using the video for distribution through email or on a web site, always end with your contact information.

There are a few things you want to avoid when making a video for use in a viral marketing campaign:

- Don't be too cute with the presentation. Keep the cute factor to a minimum. Unless you are touting an informational product on taking care of kittens, you don't want to run the risk of alienating viewers who are not particularly comfortable with sentimentality. A little goes a long way.
- Try to stay away from becoming a condensed infomercial. While you are trying to promote a product, that does not mean you have to rely on the same format that is used in cable and broadcast television, especially the examples you see on various shopping

channels. Instead, think in terms of thirty second commercials you've seen in years past that got right to the point and still held your attention – that is the angle you want to pursue.

- Don't use verbiage that is likely to offend other people. While this may seem like a common sense approach, it is amazing how many sales oriented videos online today completely forget this and allow the use of various words that offend one or more sectors of the population. A good rule of thumb is that if you are not sure a word is appropriate, don't use it. Find another word that is less likely to offend.
- Don't rely on stereotypes. We've all seen them – the clueless male, the ditsy wife, the weird folks of questionable orientation. There are stereotypes out there that are about race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, geographic locations and just about any other aspect of people you can imagine. Unless you are subtly debunking a stereotype, there is a good chance that you will end up alienating people who otherwise would have been on board and helped you generate more traffic.
- Don't create something that will be dated in a year's time. The fact is that when a video goes viral, it is out there circulating from now on. Once people download the video and start forwarding it to friends, that is it. If you rely heavily on background music, clothing styles, or other cultural benchmarks that are clearly an indication of a particular time era, you run the risk of turning people off because they think the video is old and the product is probably old and obsolete. One exception is to style the video to reflect an era that is long past, such as the Roaring Twenties or the doo-wop days of the Fifties. People will immediately catch the fun and the video will be as fresh five years from now as it is today.
- Don't release a video until you are completely happy with it. Remember that the video represents you and your product. If you have doubts about the quality or the structure of the video, there is a good chance that others will feel the same way. You only have one chance to make a first impression. Don't blow it by putting something out there that will do you more harm than good.

While it can take a little while to come up with the right concept for the video, it is well worth the effort to do the best job you possibly can. This means creating the right script and putting together something that will make the right impression on the viewers.

# HOW TO I GO ABOUT CREATING A VIRAL VIDEO?

Once you have your concept, your basic script and a good idea of how to stage the action for the video, you are ready to begin the actual digital filming. Basically, you have two options open to you when things get to this stage. You can either do it yourself or you can have the video put together by a professional. There are some pros and cons to both approaches that you should consider.

## **A. Do It Yourself**

Many entrepreneurs choose to put together their own viral marketing videos. And many of these videos do work very well and generate plenty of positive attention, resulting in traffic and sales. The advantages to doing the video yourself include:

- Low production costs. This is often the main reason to do the video yourself, especially if you are starting up your business on a shoestring (i.e. no money) budget. The lower the production costs, the sooner you begin to make a profit from your sales.
- Not very technical. Depending on the situation, you may be able to use your digital camera along with some basic software to create a great video. Even if you are not particularly savvy to technical stuff, it is not that hard to learn how to use the camera or the software that can enhance the audio and video components.
- You can change things at the last minute. If you have a flash of inspiration while making the video, no problem. You simply stop the filming, make the changes and then pick up the filming at an appropriate spot. The software will help you smooth out any rough edges later.

Of course, there are also some pitfalls you need to watch out for when you decide to make the videos yourself:

- Poor visual quality. Unless you know how to light the set area properly, chances are your video will be too dark or look as if it were filmed under the noonday sun. Unless this is the effect you intentionally are trying to create, this can be detrimental to making your case with a viewer.
- Sub-par equipment. While most video cameras are fine for capturing special moments at a family reunion, not every video

camera out there is good enough to create an informational video that is aimed at selling a product. You may have to spend a little money to get equipment that is capable of turning out the type of video that you need.

- It may be obviously amateurish. Not every amateur turns out videos that are bad or even just barely good. In fact, some amateurs turn out product that is on a par with anything that a professional could manage. But unless you are the creative type, this is not likely to be the case. If the folksy approach is not conducive to reaching the right market, making the video yourself may close more doors than it will open.

## **B. Use a Professional**

Going with a professional to create your video might be the best option in some cases. There are several benefits to having the video put together by a professional. These include:

- Slick production quality. Professionals have the right equipment to make a quality video. You probably don't.
- Easy to offer in several formats. Once the basic format is in place, many professionals will provide the video in several of the most popular formats. This essentially allows you to have three or more video options for the price of one.
- Access to tools you don't have. A professional videographer has more than the right equipment. He or she will also have illustrating tools, background props, and other items that will have a positive effect on the visual presentation. There is a good chance you would have to spend a lot of time running around trying to find all this stuff if you did the video yourself.
- You get more ideas on how to put together the video. There is a good chance that a professional may know a twist or angle that will actually help you achieve your goal easier than what you have in mind. After all, they do this sort of thing for a living and have seen it all. This added bonus can take your good video all the way to great status.
- The ability to put together a perfectly synched audio track. While the main focus of using a professional has to do with the visuals, the fact is that they can often create an audio track at the same

time that will work perfectly with what is seen on the screen. This means if you insert slides between live action sequences, the voice overs and any other audio element will time perfectly with the transition.

While the benefits of using a professional are many, your circumstances may dictate that it is in your best interests to do the video yourself. Here are some of the disadvantages to having a professional do the job:

- You will pay a nice sum for the video. Even a thirty-second video will cost much more if a professional makes use of his or her resources to create the finished product. If money is tight, you simply may not be able to afford it right now.
- Last minute changes are difficult or even impossible to make. Once the production process begins, those last minute bursts of inspiration are not likely to be greeted with a great deal of warmth. Of course, if you want to pay extra to get that great idea worked in, that is possible. Just be aware that it will delay completion of the project and could run the cost up to a point that will make your heart stop.
- You lose a certain amount of creative control. Because it is not possible to ever fully convey your vision to the professional, there is a good chance that little nuances you would have included with ease will not show up in the final cut. Plus, there is not much of an opportunity for you to make small adjustments as the production is taking place. In short, you hand over control to someone else and hope for the best.
- You still pay even if you don't like the final product. While it is true you may not have to pay the full price for a final product that you don't like, there are usually what is known as kill fees involved. A kill fee basically ensures that the professional will make enough off the project to at least cover expenses, even if you decide the video is not what you want.

So which approach is right? Actually, they both are workable situations. However, one may be a better fit for you as you start out. Keep in mind that once your viral marketing campaign is up and running, you may soon make enough money so that your next viral campaign can include a video that is professionally made and still meets your vision and expectations.

While you may be tempted to go with a professional from the very beginning, only do this if (a) you have plenty of money to invest in the video, and (b) find a professional who is able to more or less capture your vision. Making a viral video is not exactly rocket science, although it does take some creativity and some basic know how if you want to produce something that will make a favorable impression. Give it a try and you may find that you can come up with your own videos with more ease than you thought possible.

## WHAT MAKES A VIDEO GO VIRAL?

As you put together your concepts for a video, it is important to keep in mind what factors are likely to make the video a viable tool in a viral marketing campaign. Here are some examples of what will make the video draw traffic and create a lot of word of mouth among the right people:

- The subject matter makes sense to the viewers. They don't have to stretch their minds in order to identify with what they see on the screen. There is immediate rapport established that allows viewers to understand and relate to what is going on in the video.
- The video is easy to download and easier to distribute. While often people will share a link to the video, they may also want to download it. Make sure the video is not so large that it takes forever. Potential distributors may grow weary and terminate the download before it is complete. The video should be uploaded and distributed to popular video sites like [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), [www.revver.com](http://www.revver.com), <http://video.google.com>, etc.
- The logical conclusion of the video inspires a "wow" factor. That is, by the time viewers get to the end of the video, they are already sold on the need for the product and are open to finding out how to get it. At the same time, they have already thought of a few people who need to see the video and make plans to pass the word along.

Essentially, a video will go viral if it connects quickly with viewers, is easily distributed through various means, and inspires people to clue others into the video and urge them to watch it.

## FACTORS THAT MAKE A VIDEO GO VIRAL:

As more and more markets become receptive to the application of viral marketing strategies, the viral video has continued to evolve and adapt to more settings. Still, it is possible to identify a few basic types of viral videos that tend to attract attention:

- The entertaining viral video. This video sets up action, raises a conflict, and resolves the conflict quickly. The approach may be comedic or even be satirical in nature. As long as the video holds the attention of the viewer and prompts a purchase and passing on access to the video to others, it has done the job.
- The informational viral video. While this one is dryer and more factual than an entertainment video, it works very well in settings where a direct approach is not only acceptable, but expected. This example of a video would work well in promoting an informational product that has to do with a serious subject, such as a health or legal issue. Here, the focus is on providing just enough information to entice the viewer to follow through and buy the product, let others know about the product, and possibly consider becoming an affiliate.
- The conversational viral video. This approach often includes using testimonials related to how the product helped people. The video follows a pattern of presenting the information as if everyone were standing around at a party and having a casual conversation. This type of video is often non-threatening and very accessible to a wide audience, while still not being dry like an informational video or trying to amuse like an entertainment video.

There are a number of variations on these three basic themes. Keep in mind there is no written or unwritten rule that says a video cannot contain elements of one or more basic prototype. Only you can determine what mixture of styles is the right approach to use with your target market.

## ON TO THE BACK END OF THE VIRAL MARKETING PROCESS – WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN EVERYTHING IS LAUNCHED?

Now that you have your reports and promotional ebooks ready for public consumption and distribution, have set up your blogs, joined the social networking sites and created your videos, the time has come to get everything up and running. To that end, you post on your blogs, hang your videos on various sites, and send out viral emails to get the ball rolling.

Once all that is done, you can just sit back and let viral marketing do its thing, right?

Wrong.

While viral marketing is a form of marketing that is self-perpetuating, that does not mean you can unleash the beast and then rest on your laurels. Even after you have a nice affiliate team making money for themselves and for you, there is still work to be done if you want to keep the cash coming. Here are some examples of things you need to do:

- Keep promoting your product. This means new entries on your blogs from time to time, creating a new video now and then, and keeping those social networking sites active and capable of reeling in more visitors.
- Evaluate your methods. As time goes on, you will find that particular aspects of the viral marketing approach work very well in your market, while others seem to generate little or no return. This may be due to the sensibilities of your market base, or it may be due to the fact that you failed to make best use of that particular aspect. The only way you will know the true story is to evaluate everything you did in terms of the return it generates.
- Tweak things when they need tweaking. No viral marketing tool is so great that it can't stand a little enhancing from time to time. As you become more comfortable with writing promotional copy that is likely to be passed on, designing promotional ebooks that will be read and recommended, and creating videos that attract a lot of positive attention, you will pick up on little ways to improve the next round of tools you release in the marketplace.

- Be on the lookout for new ways to implement the principles behind viral marketing. Since the World Wide Web continues to advance, there is every reason to expect that new tools will become available for use, as well as new concepts for web sites that may be ideal for your purposes. Stay on top of developments and be ready to jump on the bandwagon early in the game. That will help your efforts to stand out more and differentiate you from the pack with greater ease.
- Mentor your affiliates. No affiliate program survives, much less thrives, when the affiliates feel as if no one cares about them. While you can't hold hands all day long, there are proactive ways to stay in contact with your affiliates and motivate them to spread the word about your products throughout their social circle. Set up an affiliate email group and send something out to the whole group at least once a week. Recognize affiliates who generated a certain level of sales during the past month. Pass along tips on marketing the products. Encourage affiliates to contact you with questions, ideas, and comments. The stronger your rapport with the affiliates, the healthier your affiliate network will be.
- Always be on the lookout for ways to make things better. It may be a new social networking site that is just starting up, a related niche market you can enter, or some new incentive that is likely to draw in some good affiliates. Every businessperson knows that the key to winning is to take care of what you have even as you investigate new possibilities. As an entrepreneur, you are a businessperson. Take advantage of what comes your way.

Launching a viral marketing campaign is only the beginning for you. It provides a foundation for all the possibilities that are to come. This means you must keep working, keep refining and keep being on the lookout for new and better tools to use in getting people to spread the word. There is no way to accomplish these tasks by sitting back and putting everything on autopilot. Besides, there will be plenty of time to do that after you have created financial security for you and your business.

## CONCLUSION

As with any type of marketing approach, viral marketing is not static. The process is always evolving and adapting itself to new situations. While the basic approaches here will work in just about every situation, the way that you implement them may differ slightly

depending on the niche market you are attempting to reach. With that in mind, it is important to remember the following:

- You are not alone in using viral marketing. There are lots of other entrepreneurs out there who are using the approach to make money. This is good news for you, since you can draw on their experience to refine your own efforts. Join a site or forum where viral marketers gather and interact with them. Everyone can learn a few tricks from their peers that can be incorporated into their own work.
- Things will keep getting better. You will probably feel somewhat ill at ease with viral marketing at first. After all, it is something new to you. That is okay. As you begin to get a handle on what does and does not work in your niche market, it will be easier to know how to draft text for emails and reports, what type of detail to put on splash pages, and how to create a video that catches the eyes of the right people.
- There is limitless potential with viral marketing. The main benefit to this approach is that as long as there are people out there who see value in your products and are willing to pass along promotional information about them to others, your pool of potential customers will continue to grow. The more people that read the emails, download the ebooks and view the videos, the better your chances of making a sale and earning a customer.

Take what you have learned here and continue to add to it. As you get into your first viral marketing effort, there is a good chance you will find out quickly that so much of the approach is simple common sense. And since you already have that, you are highly likely to be successful.

You have the tools at hand. Develop or locate your core product today. Research your targeted markets. Begin designing your viral emails and reports and put together a free ebook that will link back to ways to order your product. Join social marketing sites and begin to get to know them. And cultivate that affiliate sales force by offering them attractive options to make money.

Now, get busy and build your network.

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